

Internet-Based Patent and Trademark Application Management System

Field of the Invention

The invention relates generally to managing patent and trademark applications,
5 and more specifically to an internet-based system for management of patent and
trademark applications.

Claim of Priority

This application claims priority from the provisional application "Internet-
10 Based Patent and Trademark Application Management System"; Steven W. Lundberg,
Inventor; filed March 29, 2001.

Background of the Invention

Patent agents and attorneys that specialize in patent prosecution typically draft
15 dozens of patent applications per year, and are engaged in prosecution of many more.
Each of these must be carefully tracked by the patent attorney or legal assistant, so that
important status information such as potential bar dates, deadlines for response to
office action amendments and responses, and other data are not overlooked.
Management of this data has historically been managed by inclusion of each item on a
20 docket that is tracked on paper docketing calendars, or more recently using
commercially available electronic docketing software that serves the same purpose as a
calendar.

But, when multiple attorneys are involved in docketed matters for multiple

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clients, when complex client or legal rules must be applied, or when corporate clients wish to participate in the docket management of matters on a law firm or attorney's docket, docket management using paper calendars and simple docketing software can become labor-intensive and subject to errors. It is not uncommon for paper checklists of application drafting guidelines from clients, e-mail messages relating to a case, and multiple copies of docketing information to be kept separately for each patent or trademark application managed by an attorney or firm. Coordination and communication of this information is not a trivial task, and requires a significant amount of time and attention from the typical patent attorney or agent.

A system for managing patent and trademark applications and information related to these applications is desired, as well as a system to facilitate communication and coordination of this application-related information.

Summary of the Invention

A system for managing patent application data via the Internet, comprising matter, task, and security modules. The matter module is operable to manage data such as docketing data relating to patent matters, the tasks module is operable to manage tasks related to each matter managed by the matter module, and the security module is operable to restrict access to task and matter data management to selected system users. The system is implemented in some embodiments as a World Wide Web site on the Internet, which in further embodiments comprises various components such as an application server, a Java server, and a database.

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5 Figure 2 shows a messages web page, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 4 shows a new matters web page, consistent with an embodiment of the
10 present invention.

Figure 6 shows a templates web page, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 8 shows a user management web page, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 10 shows an activities web page, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 11 shows an entities view web page for a selected matter, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 12 shows an associated parties web page for a selected matter, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

5 Figure 13 shows an IDS documents web page of data associated with a selected matter, consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description

10 In the following detailed description of sample embodiments of the invention, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific sample embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. These embodiments are described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, and it is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that logical, mechanical, electrical, and other
15 changes may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the invention is defined only by the appended claims.

20 The present invention provides a system for managing a docket of patent or trademark-related applications, and for coordinating and communicating such information among multiple parties involved in the patent or trademark application process.

The invention comprises in one embodiment a system for managing patent

application data via the Internet, and comprises matter, task, and security modules.

The matter module is operable to manage data such as docketing data relating to patent matters, the tasks module is operable to manage tasks related to each matter managed by the matter module, and the security module is operable to restrict access to task and matter data management to selected system users. The system is implemented in some embodiments as a World Wide Web site on the Internet, which in further embodiments comprises various components such as an application server, a Java server, and a database.

Figure 1 illustrates one embodiment of a front World Wide Web (WWW) web page of a system consistent with the present invention. A user will log in to the example system shown here by entering a user name at 101, and a password at 102. If a prospective user does not have an account but wishes to create one, the user may do so by selecting to register at 103.

Upon logging in, the user is presented with a home screen presenting the user with various options. For example, the user may be presented with or may select to view his new messages, as is shown generally in Figure 2. Each message as shown in Figure 2 includes a message type represented by an icon at 201, an indication of the number of attachments to the message at 202, a matter title indicating a matter related to the message at 203, an indication of who the message is from at 204, a message title at 205, and the time and date the message was received at 206. The user may select a message to view the message, may select a user to send a reply message to the user, may select the message title to display the message, may select the number of

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Matters and users may be associated in some embodiments of the invention with organizations, such as with particular client companies or particular law firms. These organizations are managed by the example embodiment of the system discussed here as is shown in Figure 5. Each organization is identified by name as shown at 501, and has a type associated with it to identify the nature and role of the organization. The contact or agent for each organization is shown at 503, along with a contact phone number 504 and e-mail address 505 for each contact. Organization data may in some embodiments of the invention be edited or added only by system administrators, and in further embodiments select members who are part of an organization will be given authority to edit existing organization data.

Tasks may be created for matters by manually entering tasks, or in some embodiments of the invention may further be created automatically via templates or other predefined task generation utilities. Figure 6 illustrates a view of templates available for application to matters in one embodiment of the invention. The template name is shown at 601, and the organization associated with the template is shown at 602. The last modification of the template is reflected at 603 and 604, where the modifying user's identity and the date and time of the last modification are shown. The user has the option to delete existing templates as shown at 606, to create new templates, or to edit existing templates as shown at 605.

Templates include such items as creating checklists to ensure proper drafting criteria are met, creating tasks with associated dates such as deadlines for responses, and other similar tasks that are common to many applications and have predictable

elements. For example, a client may request that a certain checklist of drafting criteria be completed before each filing, and the checklist may be implemented as a task associated with each of the client's matters via use of a template. Also, creation of docket dates and tasks associated with those dates in a system such as the present invention may be automatically calculated and created by a template, ensuring proper application of applicable rules. Many other such examples of tasks common to many applications with predictable elements exist, and all are within the scope of the template function as implemented in the example of the present invention presented here.

Figure 7 illustrates the activities that are associated with an amendment and response to a typical United States Patent and Trademark Office issued Office Action. The typical shortened statutory three-month date for response is shown as an activity item at 701, and is followed by subsequent deadlines for taking each allowable extension of time past that date. These items will then automatically be added to the task list of each matter to which the template is applied, creating appropriate task entries for that matter.

Figure 8 illustrates a user management view of all users that have registered with the embodiment of the present invention described here. The user name or alias is shown at 801, the entity type is shown at 802, the full name of the entity is shown at 803, and contact information including phone and e-mail are shown at 804 and 805. The user management screen shown here allows a system administrator to delete users at 806, and indicates the source of the user at 807.

An example message list is shown in Figure 9, which illustrates a variety of messages for a particular user. The subject or name of the message is shown at 901, and the title of the matter to which the message pertains is shown at 902. The sender of the message is shown at 903, and the date the message was received is shown at 904. At 905, the user is shown a Delete object that may be selected to delete the associated message. The type of message is indicated at 906, and the number of attachments to the message are shown at 907. Note that in this example, several automatically generated messages such as reports of actions completed or docket dates are shown in the message box.

Figure 10 shows a view of tasks or activities associated with a particular matter. The activity is shown at 1001, and is selectable by the user. Selecting the activity by name will open the detail list for that particular activity. Any restrictions on access to the activity are shown at 1002, and the status of the activity is shown at 1003. Relevant dates for the activity, which may vary in type depending on the activity status, are shown at 1004. At 1005, the user may edit or delete listed activities. Because the matter shown here is an issued patent, the patent number, issue date, and other information are known and are displayed at 1006 in a matter page header.

Figure 11 shows an entities view of a particular selected matter. The parties in interest in this example comprise Intel Corp., as shown at 1101. The law firm associated with the matter is shown at 1102.

The embodiment of the invention shown here also shows additional associated

parties, such as corporate counsel responsible for overseeing the matter, the attorney and paralegals involved with the case, and other users or entities involved with the matter. This is shown in Figure 12, where the associated users are listed at 1201. The role each user has in the matter is shown at 1202, and the status of the user is shown at 1203. Note that a user may be invited to join a matter, but is not listed as active in this embodiment of the invention until the user takes affirmative steps to join in a matter.

Figure 13 is an IDS documents view of data associated with a matter, and shows documents that must be disclosed in an Information Disclosure Statement or IDS to the USPTO. Because no documents have been associated with this example matter, none are illustrated here. For patent documents that must be cited, the patent number, issue date, country of issue, name, and translation are shown at 1301. For documents that are not patent documents but are other publications, the author's name, document title, citation, referred pages, and publication date are recorded and are shown at 1302.

The example embodiment of the present invention explained above and in the figures is further described in attached Appendix 1. This appendix, entitled "PortfolioIP – Use Cases", further describes ways in which the functionality of the present invention may be used by various users and organizations to facilitate more efficient management of a patent or trademark docket.

The second appendix, Appendix 2, discusses in much greater detail the way in which Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) management functionality is integrated into the example embodiment of the invention as discussed above, and more

specifically as was described in Figure 13 and the accompanying description.

The third appendix, a compact disc marked with the title and attorney docket number of this application, contains source code, web page code, and other code as will be understood by one skilled in the art to enable and more fully characterize the example embodiment of the present invention described herein.

what the present invention provides

Although specific embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and described herein, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that any arrangement which is calculated to achieve the same purpose may be substituted for the specific embodiments shown. This application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations of the invention. It is intended that this invention be limited only by the claims, and the full scope of equivalents thereof.